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ABSTRACT

This study attempts to identify points of intersection between two layers of educational reform by analyzing how the goals of the program "Children Achieving" overlap with those of the federal Title I schoolwide programs in the Philadelphia (Pennsylvania) School District. Children Achieving was a district-wide comprehensive restructuring plan. Inevitably, its introduction would change the way in which Title I services were administered. To examine how the Children Achieving reforms interact with the Title I schoolwide projects, the study used a comparative case study method, selecting four inner-city elementary schools for comparison. Two had predominantly African-American enrollment, one was largely Hispanic, and the other contained many students of limited English proficiency. Preliminary findings from this study suggest that Children Achieving is meeting its potential to enhance the Title I schoolwide projects. In spite of political conflicts at high levels of administration, the strategies of the Children Achieving reforms generally mesh well with and are facilitating the implementation of Title I schoolwide projects. The new curriculum and assessment priorities were being assimilated into the activities of professional development, planning sessions, lesson plans, instruction, and testing at the school and classroom levels. (Contains 4 tables and 14 references.) (SLD)

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Laboratory for Student Success

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Kenneth K. Wong and Julie Brown
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The research reported herein was supported in part by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) of the U.S. Department of Education through a contract to the Laboratory for Student Success (LSS) established at the Temple University Center for Research in Human Development and Education (CRHDE), and in part by CRHDE. The opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect the position of the supporting agencies, and no official endorsement should be inferred.

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Introduction

> Many educational reformers have wanted to wipe the institutional slate clean and start again. But that has rarely happened. Instead, reforms have tended to layer, one on top of the other. The evolution of schools is in part the story of the interactions between these layers of change
>
> —Tyack and Cuban, *Tinkering Toward Utopia*, 1995

When Superintendent David Hornbeck introduced the *Children Achieving* reform agenda to the Philadelphia School District in 1995-1996, he set out to restructure the existing system of education there. But a foundation of other school reform initiatives was already in place in Philadelphia by the time *Children Achieving* was introduced, numerous initiatives that ranged from federal programs to individual school improvement efforts. This study will examine how the *Children Achieving* agenda is being implemented in Philadelphia with respect to one of those existing layers of education reform: the federal Title I schoolwide programs.

Inevitably, the introduction of a District-wide, comprehensive restructuring plan like the *Children Achieving* agenda will change the way that Title I schoolwide support services are administered to at-risk children in Philadelphia's schoolwide projects. This presents researchers with a unique opportunity to analyze the interaction of two major reform programs and study their collective impact on schools in an urban setting. It also provides an opportunity to look at the simultaneous implementation of two reform initiatives.

Objectives of Study

While several research studies are attempting to track the forward course of the *Children Achieving* reforms from a base-line starting point,[1] this study does not set out to document the progressive implementation of a single reform program. Instead, it will attempt to identify points of intersection between layers of reform. This study will analyze how the goals of *Children Achieving* overlap with those of the federal Title I schoolwide programs in the Philadelphia School District. This research project will investigate the kinds of policies and

[1] See Consortium for Policy Research in Education; Research for Action by OMG, Inc. entitled *A first year evaluation report of Children Achieving: Philadelphia's education reform*; and publications by the School District of Philadelphia's Office of Accountability and Assessment.

support services provided under *Children Achieving* which foster the coherent implementation of Title I schoolwide project goals. In addition to analyses of intersections at the school and classroom level, this study will also examine how *Children Achieving* and Title I schoolwide programs overlap at the District and cluster level as well. The goal of this study is to better understand how the implementation of the *Children Achieving* agenda is affecting those students whom the Title I schoolwide projects are designed to help: children at risk of educational failure.

Literature Review: Patterns of Implementation

The literature on the implementation of education reform policy can provide a conceptual framework for understanding how *Children Achieving* is impacting the existing Title I schoolwide programs. Several studies of policy implementation reveal predictable patterns in the adoption of any new education reform programs. Recognizing these patterns and cycles in the implementation of *Children Achieving* and Title I schoolwide programs will help analyze the process of Philadelphia's reform. It will help illuminate the different phases of Philadelphia's reform, and perhaps allow researchers to identify in which stage the program finds itself after two years of implementation.

In a history of American public school reform, *Tinkering Towards Utopia* and Cuban point out that the process of turning education policy into practice rarely goes according to plan. The plans that are proposed in the "policy talk" circles often do not become implemented in their original form (Tyack & Cuban, 1995, p.55). This is largely due to the inevitable resistance when any reform is introduced. New policies redefine roles, shift priorities, and disrupt routines of educators and administrators. As Tyack and Cuban explain, there is a gradual accommodation of these new reforms after the initial resistance. People working in the schools and offices to put the policies into practice tend to make the reforms fit the schedules, structures, and images of schooling that are familiar to them. They design hybrids, or "tinker" with reforms. Although this tinkering might be frustrating for the policy makers and politicians, Tyack and Cuban suggest that the tinkering is ultimately beneficial. "Tinkering is a way of preserving what is valuable, and re-working what is not" (Ibid, p.5). In other words, tinkering constitutes the accommodation necessary to gradually overcome the initial resistance and implement educational change.

Other studies of the education policy implementation confirm this pattern of initial resistance followed by adaptation and accommodation. In his 1971 study of the implementation of Chapter 1 programs in Massachusetts, Jerome Murphy argued that conflict between authorities at different levels of government shaped the process of implementation. He noted

that the state, local, and federal administrators competed with each other to regulate and steer the implementation of the Chapter 1 programs. Murphy argued that education policy was translated into practice not so much by practitioners "tinkering" with official policies, but by the politics and power struggles. Initial conflicts subsided when an even distribution of power was reached, and when local-level constituents were given a voice in a program's implementation (Murphy, 1971; Wong, 1994).

Peterson, Rabe, and Wong's 1988 study of Chapter I also documented a give-and-take, gradual accommodation pattern to its implementation. The study documented the back-and-forth regulation between the different levels of government overseeing Chapter I programs. Originally, the federal legislators wrote loose program administration guidelines, contributing to misunderstandings of the program at lower levels during the mid-1960s. A second phase of stricter controls followed in the mid-1970s, accompanied by the conflicts and power struggles between local, state, and federal administrators. Now in its third phase, the Title I program has less strict requirements, leaving state and local administrators free to modify the program to existing contexts (Peterson, Rabe, & Wong, 1988). In this phase, mutual accommodation has allowed for a closer adaptation of the program to specific contexts, leaving Districts room to "tinker" with program components.

Context of Research Study: Emerging Patterns in Philadelphia

Each of these patterns of education policy implementation initially seem to be evident as the *Children Achieving* reforms are introduced to Title I schoolwide projects in Philadelphia. First, the highly-charged political climate of Philadelphia bears out Murphy's theory that political conflict and competition among intergovernmental institutions will heavily influence the course of a program's implementation. When the *Children Achieving* reforms were first implemented, there was considerable competition and contention between the superintendent, the central administration, the teachers unions, and the courts at the District and state level over the priorities of reform. The state court ordered the District to include specific programs in the budget to address a 25-year old desegregation suit, which competed with the priorities of the new programs under the *Children Achieving* agenda. The teachers' union announced its antagonism towards the superintendent, as it opposed some of the provisions of the *Children Achieving* agenda regarding merit-based pay and sanctions for teachers based on student academic performance.[2]

[2] Press reports from 1995-1996 in *Philadelphia Inquirer* and *Daily News*.

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In addition to these conflicts, the District faced budget deficits in preparing the first and second year budgets for the *Children Achieving* agenda. Even into the second year of reform, the 1996-1997 school year, the superintendent, the mayor, and the school board battled the state legislators over who would fund the bulk of the reform package: the city or the state. A resolution had not been reached as of the fall of 1997 (Byers, 1997). After two years of struggling with the teachers union, the legislature, and his own school board over the direction, funding, and priorities of reform, David Hornbeck acknowledged the counter-productivity of the internal fighting,

> We need a measure of cohesiveness on the board. The fact is that what we've undertaken here in Philadelphia has never been done anyplace, and fights among the board members and the superintendent don't serve the cause of the kids (as reported in Mezcappa, 1997).

Secondly, earlier studies of the implementation of the *Children Achieving* agenda showed evidence that the program's introduction was met with considerable confusion and resistance at the sub-District level and school level as well (Wong & Sunderman, 1997). The new restructuring plan dividing the District into 22 clusters rearranged structures of authority and redistributed power among the central administrators, the cluster leaders, and the principals. The decentralization brought with it new systems of communication that some cluster leaders and principals found confusing. While policy was issued from the top levels, some of those at the levels closest to the schools and the classrooms questioned the purpose and the specifics of some of these new directives, complaining of miscommunication and multiple centers of control (Ibid).

Finally, at the school level, there were reports that the teachers and principals felt "overloaded" that first year of *Children Achieving*. While schools were expected to begin implementing many components of the new reform program simultaneously, surveys showed that in reality, schools only focused on starting one or two initiatives at a time, weaving them into existing programs (Wong & Brown, 1997). Surveys showed that by the end of the first year, some parts of the *Children Achieving* agenda were not having much of an impact on the teaching and learning activities in the classroom. Most of the changes were taking place at the upper levels, where structural reorganization was happening amid conflict and confusion. At the classroom level, activities were shaped by strategies in place before *Children Achieving*; "the new reforms were simply added on top of earlier initiatives" (Wong & Sunderman, 1997, p.8).

Thus, the emerging pattern in Philadelphia seems to indicate significant resistance and conflict in the initial stages. The literature suggests that this conflict and resistance surrounding the implementation of the *Children Achieving* and Title I schoolwide programs in Philadelphia is to be expected, given the observed patterns inherent in the introduction of new education policy. The question now is, will a period of mutual adaptation and accommodation follow this initial conflict? Will the actors at different levels of government begin to cooperate with each other, diminishing power struggles? Will the practitioners adapt *Children Achieving's* policies to their Title I schoolwide settings, "tinkering" until a reform gradually begins to takes place?

These are some questions that will guide researchers as they study the second year of *Children Achieving* and its effect on Title I schoolwide programs. This research will go beyond the reports of the initial resistance to the educational changes and examine ways in which teachers and administrators are tinkering and adapting *Children Achieving* to their existing schoolwide settings. It will identify the points of intersection and document specific places where the accommodation and adaptation improves Title I schoolwide programs to benefit at-risk students in urban schools.

Methodology

To examine how the *Children Achieving* reforms intersect with the Title I schoolwide projects, this study uses the comparative case study method. Four inner-city elementary schools were selected to be analyzed and compared, each one from a different cluster. Selection was based on socio-economic characteristics of the schools to represent the diversity in Philadelphia's School District. One school in the study has a predominately Hispanic population, another has a significant LEP population. The two remaining schools are predominately African-American.

Researchers visited these four schools and their respective cluster offices to conduct staff interviews and classroom observations in May 1996, November 1996, and May 1997. Table 1 summarizes the sources used and the time period in which the study took place.

Table 1: Sources Used in Study

Source	1st Year of *Children Achieving* August 1995—May, 1996	2nd Year of *Children Achieving* August 1996—May, 1997
OMG Surveys	**April 1996**: Administered in to the first cohort of elementary schools; 27 schools responding	
Site visits	**May, 1996:** Researchers visited 4 schoolwide project sites; 4 cluster offices; interviews and classroom observations	**November, 1996**: Researchers visited same 4 schoolwide project sites and 4 cluster offices; interviews and classroom observations **May, 1997:** Follow-up visit to 4 schoolwide sites, 4 cluster offices; interviews and classroom observations
Documents	Researchers collected written materials from schools and cluster offices: school improvement plans, samples of tests, budgets, professional development material	Researchers continued to collect written materials
Media Reports	**On-going, began August 1995**: Researchers tracked newspaper reports on *Children Achieving*, and issues related to school reform in city from *Philadelphia Inquirer* and the *Daily News*	Continued gathering newspaper reports

To supplement the interviews, researchers collected documents such as budget sheets, school improvement plans, agendas from planning meetings, and sample student achievement tests from the District and cluster offices and from the school sites. In addition, researchers analyzed the raw data from school-level surveys written and administered by OMG, Inc. educational research group in 1995-1996 school year. Also, individual-level student achievement data is being collected from the District's Office of Accountability and Assessment for the 1994-1995 and 1995-1996 school years. This study will use base-line student achievement data and school-level surveys from the 1994-1995 school year as benchmarks for comparing the four schools to each other, and for a comparison of the schoolwide projects and non-schoolwide projects in the District.

From this data, researchers examined how the *Children Achieving* reform programs affect the administration and effectiveness of the Title I schoolwide projects. In attempting to detail the programs' points of intersection, this study focuses on how the *Children Achieving*

reforms affect how cluster administrators, and school principals, teachers, and staff in Title I schoolwide projects perform the following:

- allocate resources to Title I schoolwide project activities and services;
- conduct professional development activities;
- design curriculum and implement academic standards; and
- organize instructional practices and academic assessment.

These activities are examined with respect to the restructuring plan which subdivides the District into smaller clusters along school feeder patterns, and which subdivides schools into smaller organizational units called Small Learning Communities. This study investigates how the administrative and support services provided by the newly-created Teaching and Learning Network, and the equity coordinator positions at this cluster level are impacting the provision of Title I services at the school level. It also examines how the new Small Learning Communities and the creation of self-governing school councils are affecting the delivery of existing Title I schoolwide support services. The project will analyze the impact of the new academic standards and assessment mechanisms on the instruction of students in Title I schoolwide projects. Particular attention is paid to how each of these practices affect the instruction and support of at-risk children themselves.

Background: Title I Programs in the Philadelphia School District

In order to analyze the impact of *Children Achieving* on the Title I schoolwide projects in Philadelphia, it is first necessary to understand the scope, goals, and operations of the federal Title I schoolwide programs in Philadelphia. In the Philadelphia School District, a majority of the schools are Title I schools. Presently, two-thirds of all of Philadelphia's 257 schools receive Title I funding. During the 1996-1997 school year, these schools collectively received 78.9 million dollars in federal Title I funding. This funding has allowed these schools to employ 1,900 staff persons to provide instructional and support services to over 131,000 students (School District of Philadelphia, 1996-1997). Given this scope of Title I, there is bound to be considerable overlap with the *Children Achieving* agenda and the Title I program in most of Philadelphia's schools.

Since 1988, Philadelphia schools with high proportions of at-risk students eligible for federal Title I aid began receiving their funding as schoolwide projects. This schoolwide designation distributed the Title I supplemental instruction and aid to all children in low-income schools as a whole, rather than targeting aid to certain disadvantaged students who are pulled out of their regular classrooms. In the first year that schoolwide projects were made viable through

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federal legislation (1988-1989), Philadelphia had 31 out of the 150 Title I schools designated schoolwide projects.[3] Since then, the program has considerably expanded in scope. As of the 1996-1997 school year, all 169 of Philadelphia's Title I schools were schoolwide projects.

In addition to the authorization of schoolwide programs in 1988-98, changes in the 1994 federal Title I legislation affected the way Philadelphia administered its Title I programs, not only with new allocation formulas, but with new academic participation requirements as well. Under the 1994 amendments to the Title I legislation, the new Title I law "established the principle that Title I students will be taught to the same high standards as other children, and evaluates the performance of Title I schools and students using the same state standards and assessments that apply to other children" (Ibid, p.1). The revised law also emphasized "professional development for educators to help them implement new techniques for educating children" (Ibid). The revisions also reiterated "Title I's continuing commitment to parent participation in program activities, encouraging parents, school staff, and students to share the responsibility for improved attendance and academic achievement" (Ibid, p.2).

In response to each of these and other changes in Title I, the School District of Philadelphia introduced several major District policies to facilitate the implementation of the Title I programs. These policies were begun several years before *Children Achieving* was launched. Table 2 highlights some of these major Title I policies in Philadelphia. Enumerating the main facets of these policies will illustrate the existing policies and will indicate the points with which the *Children Achieving* reforms intersect.

[3] In Philadelphia, for a school to be eligible for Title I funding as a schoolwide project, 80% or more of the children living in its attendance area must come from low-income families based on AFDC participation. The federal requirement for schoolwide eligibility is 50% of the students coming from poverty. Based on interview with central office administrator, School District of Philadelphia, May 15, 1996.

Table 2: Major Components of Philadelphia School District's Existing Title I Policies and Programs

Policy or Program	Purpose
1. **Schoolwide Program Support:** • **School Improvement Planning (SIP)** process and • **Instructional Support Teams (IST)**	To support schoolwide projects; integrate Title I services to children; reduce "pull-out" practices in classrooms
2. **Title I-funded personnel**: Basic Skills Teachers, classroom assistants, support staff	To provide extra help to students who needed instructional assistance; coordinate Title I program administration with classroom teachers
3. **Transitional Title I assessment plan**: SAT-9 and pre- and post-assessment tests	Regular subject testing by grade level; to comply with changes in federal 1994 legislation requiring that Title I students be evaluated according to the same state standards that apply to other children
4. **Parental involvement Compact**: home school association, school community coordinator	At least 1% of Title I funds must be spent to encourage parent involvement in school activities and students' academics
5. **Professional Development**: District-wide in-service days; seminars at schools	At least 10% of Title I funds must be spent to help teachers implement new techniques for educating children

*1. **Schoolwide program support.*** First, to foster the introduction and expansion of schoolwide projects in 1988-1989, Philadelphia School District developed a School Improvement Planning Process (SIP), and the Instructional Support Teams (IST). Both of these initiatives were aimed at restructuring the way support services and instruction were delivered to schools with at-risk students. One problem these programs were designed to correct was that of instructional fragmentation at the school. Even among the new schoolwide programs, teachers and staff still had different expectations of Title I eligible students versus the other students in the school regarding curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Instruction was fragmented—Title I students were still pulled out of their regular classrooms for instruction and not expected to adhere to the same academic standards as their peers.

Under the SIP and IST reform initiatives, teachers and staff at the school worked to reduce this instructional fragmentation. As part of the IST process, administrators and school staff provided professional development for teachers on how to keep children with special needs in the classroom for instruction. This was to remedy the common practice of teachers automatically sending the students with special needs to separate resource rooms to work with special education teachers, fragmenting instruction. Additionally, rather than targeting this

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professional development at only the special education teachers and staff, the professional development in the IST process was then targeted at all the teachers in the school to integrate instructional practices.

As part of the new SIP process, administrators in regional offices aided schools in developing plans for school re-organization. The administrators met with the principal, the teachers, and the support staff to help them in the effort to decentralize decision making about school policy from the central office to the schools themselves. In designing a school improvement plan, the school was encouraged to think strategically about how to integrate service delivery to at-risk students, and how to better meet their educational needs.

Philadelphia's schoolwide implementation plan was typical for other schoolwide programs around the country. In research synthesizing studies on the effectiveness of schoolwide programs, evidence shows that:

> The categorical approach to providing services is becoming less common. In many cases, schools have introduced or strengthened aspects of classroom instruction or curricula, . . . increasing the capacity of schools and teachers to provide instructional services more flexibly (Wong & Meyer, 1997, p.2).

2. ***Title I-funded personnel.*** In Philadelphia, the Title I schoolwide projects were encouraged to use their funding to hire special education teachers, basic skills teachers, support staff, support services assistants, and part-time classroom assistants. This was also a common component in many schoolwide projects across the country, hiring additional staff to reduce class size (Ibid, p.1). Philadelphia's Basic Skills Program employed special teachers to provide extra classroom instruction to students in subjects where their performance fell short of the class average. The goal was to enhance the students' basic academic skills, as well as their knowledge of the subject matter. The Basic Skills Program, along with the IST, also encouraged teachers to keep at-risk and special education students in the classroom, rather than pulling them out for assistance.

3. ***1994 Title I legislation: Instruction and assessment policies.*** Once SIP and IST support structures were in place, the Philadelphia School District then had to develop more specific policies to comply with the changes to the 1994 legislation requiring "that Title I students will be taught to the same high standards as other children." They had to ensure that the performance of Title I schools and students will be evaluated according to the "same state standards and assessments that apply to other children" (Wells, 1994).

To implement these new Title I monitoring and assessment requirements, Philadelphia School District introduced a transitional Title I assessment plan for the 1996-1997 school year. The transitional plan was necessary, as the Philadelphia School District had not yet officially adopted formal content and performance standards, although such standards were beginning to be developed as part of the *Children Achieving* agenda. For the 1996-1997 school year, the District would comply with the Title I monitoring requirement by conducting system-level and school-level achievement assessments.

To conduct whole system-level assessments, Philadelphia required all Title I students to take the Pennsylvania System of State Assessment exams in reading, math, and writing, along with all other students in grades 5, 6, 8, 9, 11. To judge progress, the students' performance on the PSSA would be compared to scores from previous year on the same test (School District of Philadelphia, 1996-1997).

For the school-level assessments, Philadelphia put the responsibility of designing assessment mechanisms on the individual schools, rather than dictating a formal testing plan to them. The District encouraged Title I schoolwide projects to select their own indicators of progress and to use a variety of classroom-based evaluation techniques. The school would choose two content standards from the preliminary standards being adopted by the District, for both reading and in math. For each content standard at each grade level, the school would select two performance tasks that "are both developmentally appropriate and will provide the school with an indicator of progress over time" (Ibid). Teachers would test students in the fall and again in the spring, and then report this student achievement data to the cluster administrators. Satisfactory progress between the pre-test and post-tests would show a 5% improvement in the percentage of students in each class in each grade whose performance was rated "proficient" on the test. [4]

In these Title I assessment mechanisms, the Philadelphia School District met a major challenge facing urban School Districts: "Districts implementing schoolwide projects can take the opportunity to go beyond the basic accountability requirements and consider broadening the ways in which evaluation and assessment are used (Wong & Meyer, p.2).

4. Parental Involvement programs. The re-authorized Title I law required that a minimum of 1% of the schoolwide project's annual Title I grant to be used in direct service of

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[4] The scoring rubric for the pre-and post-tests were on a four-point scale: NP= non-proficient, PP= partially proficient, P= proficient, and AP= advanced proficiency. From Information Manual, and interview with four equity coordinators, May 1997.

parent involvement. Individual Title I schools are required to develop and implement a written Parent Involvement Compact that outlines parents' roles and responsibilities regarding their participation in school activities and attention to their student's academic progress (School District of Philadelphia, 1996-1997). Many schools in the Philadelphia School District already had a Home School Association, and employed a School Community Coordinator to foster good relationships with parents and increasing their participation in school functions. Schoolwide projects were also encouraged to coordinate parent involvement activities with school-based pre-school programs including Head Start, Even Start, and Comprehensive Day Care (Ibid). Administrators from the District's Office of Standards, Equity, and Student Support Services were to assist schoolwide project sites to fulfill the Parent Involvement Policy components outlined above.

*5. **Professional Development policies***: "The new Title I law requires that a school set aside funds for professional development equal to 10% of it's total Title I allocation" (Ibid, "Payroll Procedures" section). To meet this requirement, teachers must attend professional development workshops and activities that "help them implement new techniques for educating children," according to the District's policy on Title I schoolwide professional development. For all schools, not just schoolwide sites, the Philadelphia School District central office has coordinated much of the professional development activities for teachers in the District, offering summer seminars, after school sessions, and workshops on in-service days. At the District level, teachers would attend summer sessions and regional meetings with other teachers occasionally throughout the school year. At the school level, professional development time came at the beginning of the year, when teachers would meet for orientation to the new school semester. There were also periodic grade group meetings for the SIP process, and time for discussing the pre- and post-assessment mechanisms. Much of the professional development for instructional enrichment for at-risk and special needs students came along with the District's IST training and the support offered by the Title I support staff at the school.

Points of Intersection Between Title I and the *Children Achieving* Agenda

These were the policies that were already in place to support the Title I schoolwide projects in Philadelphia at the time *Children Achieving* was implemented. As mentioned previously, many of these implementation strategies were common to schoolwide projects across the country. Also, as Wong and Meyer point out in their research synthesis, schoolwide projects

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have the potential to address three interrelated challenges in the nation's most disadvantaged schools:

1. provide increased flexibility to school professionals to meet the needs of disadvantaged pupils in poor neighborhoods;
2. can reduce curriculum and instructional fragmentation
3. improve academic accountability when there is a growing public concern over the quality of public education. (Wong & Meyer, 1997, p.2).

Many of the goals of the *Children Achieving* agenda found congruence with the goals of the Title I schoolwide programs. Each of these policies and programs Philadelphia developed regarding Title I schoolwide programs still exists in the system today, although the new *Children Achieving* reforms are transforming them. Although the *Children Achieving* program shares the ultimate aim of improving education and support services to children in urban schools, it has brought new organizational structures with new administrative personnel, new methods of instructional support and professional development, and new academic standards, accountability, and assessment mechanisms. These programs will ultimately affect the way Title I schoolwide projects administer their educational programs for at-risk students.

The new structures and administrative policies of the *Children Achieving* agenda overlap with and replace some of the functions of the District's Title I policies. The following are components of the *Children Achieving* agenda that have the potential to positively impact the way educational and support services are administered to at-risk students in Title I schoolwide projects. Table 3 highlights the corresponding points of intersection between Philadelphia's existing schoolwide programs and the new *Children Achieving* agenda:

Table 3: Major Components in the Two Sets of Reform Programs in Philadelphia

Level	Title I Schoolwide Programs	*Children Achieving* Agenda
District	1. Schoolwide Support Services	1. Reorganization of District into 22 clusters
Cluster	a) SIP and Professional Development activities b) Instructional Support Teams	a) Teaching and Learning Network b) Equity coordinators
School	2. Title I funded personnel; a) Basic Skills Teacher b) Parental involvement compact; HAS	2. School Reorganization a) Small Learning Communities b) School Councils
Classroom	3. Title I pre- and post-assessment mechanisms	3. Academic Accountability Mechanisms a) SAT-9 testing b) new District academic standards

The *Children Achieving* structures themselves are set up in ways that complement the programs, policies, and personnel of Title I schoolwide programs:

1. ***Reorganization of the District into Clusters***: Under the *Children Achieving* reforms, the District is being subdivided into 22 clusters, following the feeder patterns of elementary, middle and high schools in a neighborhood. The clusters form an intermediary support structure for the schools. In keeping with the trends of the central office providing support and direction to the schoolwide projects, the cluster structure provides administrative assistance to the schools to better coordinate and integrate professional development and services to at-risk students. The cluster is a step in shifting decision-making and support services away from the District offices and closer to the school level. It has also created new administrative positions to facilitate in delivering instruction and services to at-risk students:

- ***Teaching and Learning Network***: The Teaching and Learning Networks, whose headquarters are at each cluster office, have the potential to expand the professional development opportunities in Philadelphia, in keeping with the priorities of the Title I law. The TLN can add to professional development activities, and to the SIP process, by sending professional development coordinators to the schools. The administrative personnel in the Teaching and Learning Networks in the cluster office are to provide hands-on, in-class instructional advice to teachers on how to improve instruction to all children. In keeping with the intent of the IST program and goals of the Title I schoolwide projects to help at-risk students in group settings, the TLN coordinators work with special education teachers (Basic Skills Teachers) and

regular classroom teachers at the school to learn more specific ways of including at-risk and special education students in the regular classroom. Under the *Children Achieving* reforms, the TLN coordinators have also assumed the responsibility of helping schools develop their School Improvement Plans. Both activities have the potential to help teachers in schoolwide programs "implement new techniques for educating children." (Wells, 1994).

- ***Equity coordinators***—These cluster level administrators are charged with helping schools and teachers pay special attention to issues which affect at-risk children. The equity coordinators are to help schools on issues of special education and desegregation, and help schools identify and streamline the delivery of special services to at-risk children. They are also charged with the task of collecting the student achievement data from the pre- and post-tests to help schools track and evaluate the progress of at-risk children. Their presence, along with that of the Basic Skills Teachers and the IST team members, has the potential to further coordinate education and resources for at-risk children in schoolwide projects.

2. ***School reorganization.*** The *Children Achieving* agenda calls for the reorganization of schools into several smaller learning communities. The reform plan also calls for schools to develop School Councils, consisting of parents, teachers, school staff, and the principals. Each of these restructuring strategies holds the potential to further the goals of the schoolwide projects and to improve instruction and delivery of Title I services to at-risk children.

- ***Small Learning Communities***: The reorganization of schools into smaller learning communities is intended to create a more personal, one-to-one atmosphere between teachers and students, and to increase communication and planning time among staff. These goals of the SLC overlap with the aims of both the IST process and the schoolwide projects, which both hoped to foster integration of instruction to at-risk students within a school. Under the *Children Achieving* agenda, each SLC within a school is to develop its own independent instructional organization, grade grouping, academic theme, and goals for the year that will contribute to the overall school improvement.
- ***School Councils***: Under the new reform plan, each school is supposed to form a group of parents, teachers, school staff, and the principal to make decisions collectively about school issues. The presence of parents on the formal governing body, and the fact that the school council must be voted in by 51% of the parents in

the school, supports the Title I goal of increased parent involvement in school issues. This has the potential to supplement the activities of the Home School Association and could help schools meet parent participation requirements for their Title I schoolwide program.

3. ***New Academic Standards and Accountability Mechanisms***: As discussed earlier, the *Children Achieving* agenda has created new standards of accountability, assessment, and academic instruction which seek to improve the quality of education offered to all students in the District. Along with the goals of the re-authorized Title I legislation for schoolwide projects, the *Children Achieving* agenda seeks to hold all children to high standards, including those considered to be at-risk of educational failure. Hornbeck's plan calls for three major initiatives in this department which have the potential to impact that which is closest to the student: instruction and assessment.

- ***SAT-9***: Hornbeck adopted this nationally-recognized achievement test to be administered by the Philadelphia School District. It is a performance-based exam, testing the skills of students by having them demonstrate their knowledge of reading, writing, and mathematics in ways other than filling in multiple choice answer forms. All students in the District must take the test, and the results, compiled by the central office, are examined to judge the yearly progress of students' academic achievement. Teachers and administrators are held accountable for the results of the test, with the District applying rewards and sanctions according to test results.
- The *Children Achieving* reform plan is also in the process of articulating official academic standards for all grade levels in all subjects. These standards are to serve as benchmarks for teachers—goals for students' academic performance. In the first year of this reform, the 1996-1997 school year, transitional standards for English/Language Arts, math, and writing benchmarks were articulated. In the second year, standards for science, social studies, and history will be developed. The introduction of these new academic standards has the potential to help Philadelphia schools meet the requirements for Title I's monitoring and assessment rules. The goals of this reform effort are shared by the goals of the Title I reforms: hold all at-risk children to high academic standards (School District of Philadelphia, 1995).

Thus, each of these aspects of the *Children Achieving* agenda has the potential to facilitate the goals of the Title I schoolwide projects in Philadelphia. The new structures created by District restructuring, school-level reorganization, and the new academic standards introduced all have goals in common with the re-authorized Title I legislation and the schoolwide projects. Whether or not the reforms are being implemented in such a way as to meet their potential is the impetus for this investigation.

Summary of Preliminary Findings, 1995-1996: Initial Conflict and Confusion

The preliminary findings of this study suggest that the *Children Achieving* reform program is meeting its potential to enhance the Title I schoolwide projects. Initial evidence suggests that notwithstanding the political conflicts at the higher levels of administration, the strategies of the *Children Achieving* reforms generally mesh well with and are facilitating the implementation of the Title I schoolwide projects at the cluster, school, and classroom levels.

As described earlier, the introduction of the *Children Achieving* agenda was met with considerable political conflict at the city and District level. At the cluster level, conflict was not as vocal, but there were new relationships and positions to establish. Researchers' interviews with newly-appointed cluster personnel during the 1995-1996 year confirmed their confusion in the face of shifting priorities, new roles, and unfamiliar policies. However, there was some initial evidence to suggest that by the end of the first year, cluster administrators were beginning to define their duties and positions with respect to the schools, working out ways to bring needed services and support closer to the schoolwide projects (Wong & Sunderman, 1997).

At the school level during the first year, most teachers and principals took readily to the idea of subdividing their schools into Small Learning Communities, and in that first year, most schools began discussions about strategies to develop SLCs. In a survey of 27 elementary schools in the first six clusters of the *Children Achieving* plan, 18 reported that they had already established Small Learning Communities which were fully operating by the end of the first year of reform, the 1995-1996 school year (Wong & Brown, 1997). In response to the challenge to create fully operating school councils, schools made similar progress. Eighteen of the 27 schools reported that they had school councils up and running by the spring of 1996. However, in interviews with the schools in this study, principals admitted that a lack of parent participation on the councils was preventing them from electing functional councils. Many of the schools in the OMG survey already had some other form of decision making group in place (Ibid).

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Current Findings, 1996-1997: Gradual Adaptation and Accommodation

Notwithstanding the earlier difficulties of implementation of *Children Achieving*, by the second year of reform, there was evidence that the substantive components of the *Children Achieving* agenda were beginning to be integrated into the Title I schoolwide projects. Teachers, principals, and TLN coordinators, and school staff reported that new curriculum and assessment priorities were beginning to be integrated into activities of professional development, planning sessions, lesson plans, instruction, assessment, and testing at the school and classroom level. Rather than being another layer of reform, *Children Achieving* was starting to be integrated into the priorities, goals, and activities of the schoolwide projects.

This trend from fragmentation towards integration seemed to be taking place at the cluster, school, and classroom levels. At each level, administrators, teachers, principals, and staff were finding ways to combine the new *Children Achieving* reform initiatives with the existing priorities and services of the Title I schoolwide projects. In most cases, the combination improved the delivery of Title I services, fostered the achievement of schoolwide project goals, and worked ultimately to benefit the instruction and support of at-risk children in these schools. Evidence from the most recent site visit indicates that the cluster offices and schools are just now beginning to adapt the core components of the *Children Achieving* agenda to their respective settings to support the Title I schoolwide programs.

Table 4 summarizes the progress of integration of Title I and *Children Achieving* goals in year one and year two at District, cluster, school, and classroom level:

Table 4: Progress of Children Achieving: From Initial Conflict to Accommodation

Level	First Year of *Children Achieving* 1995-1996	Second Year of *Children Achieving* 1996-1997
District	Political conflict between superintendent, the school board and the teachers' union; desegregation lawsuit with state	Persistent conflict; political battles over budget concerns for reform agenda
Cluster	Confusion about new roles for cluster administrators; frustration with communication with central administration	TLN and equity coordinator begin to bring services closer to schoolwide projects; launch new professional development activities; collaborate with BST and IST through SIP process; help teachers keep at-risk kids in class for instruction
School	Limited implementation of District reform agenda, some set up SLC's; many connected to outside reform initiatives	SLCs become more popular and readily adopted; help integrate teacher planning and curriculum priorities; often coordinated by BST and other Title I support staff;
Classroom	Little or no impact on teaching and learning; activities shaped by previous strategies	Reforms begin to impact daily teaching practice: Title I pre-and post-assessment tests mesh well with SAT-9 and the new District academic benchmarks; teachers use tests to guide instruction and implement new standards in class instruction

As the summary table shows, by the second year of reform, schools and clusters were beginning to integrate the new *Children Achieving* reforms in ways that supplemented their existing Title I schoolwide programs and practices. After that first year of initial political conflict, confusion, and resistance, the reforms began to move into a new phase of gradual accommodation and adaptation, at least at the cluster, school, and classroom levels.

*1. **District restructuring—cluster services for schoolwide projects***: At the cluster level, administrators in the newly created TLN and equity coordinator positions continued to define their roles and establish their relationships with the schools. Whereas in the first year, teachers and principals weren't sure how the TLN and equity coordinators could assist them, the role and

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support of these cluster administrators became more clearly defined by the second year of reform.

In each of the four sites, the TLN was actively organizing new types of professional development activities for teachers both at the cluster offices and by going to provide training at the schools. There was considerable variation between sites on the matter of how frequently the TLN visited the schools, but all four clusters and their respective schools had, by the second year of reform, established schedules of when, where, and what type of professional development support services would be provided. In each site, a system was clearly emerging.[5]

One of the most helpful services schools reported the TLN providing was assisting with the development of a School Improvement Plan. This involved strategic planning sessions with teams of teachers, principals, staff, an provided schoolwide projects the opportunity to think strategically about the way they provided services to at-risk students and find ways to improve their services and instruction. One cluster helped their schools design a program to more effectively employ the classroom Support Services Assistants (known as "SSAs"). Upon visiting several schools and talking with teaches, the TLN coordinators noticed that the SSAs, hired from the community with Title I dollars, were simply assisting teachers with administrative tasks instead of helping students. The TLN then held a series of training sessions for the SSA on tutoring techniques and how to provide one-on-one reading help for children. Now the SSAs are helping teachers in more substantive ways, and providing extra instruction for children who need extra help.[6] This kind of integration of reform priorities is one example of how the new *Children Achieving* initiative meshes well with and facilitates the goals of the[7] Title I schoolwide projects.

Each of the four schools also reported that the TLN coordinators were helpful this year in doing training sessions with teachers on the new standards and academic benchmarks set by the District under the *Children Achieving* agenda. One cluster designed a six-week professional development mini-series for teachers on what the new curriculum standards were and how to integrate them into lesson plans.[8] In many cases, the training on the new standards and benchmarks was often coupled with preparation for the SAT-9. Principals and teachers in all four schools reported that their TLN coordinators helped them know how to best prepare

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[5] Interviews with cluster leaders from each of the four sites, May 15-20 1997.
[6] Interview with Cluster Leader of Cluster D, May 16, 1997.
[7] Interview with Cluster Leader of Cluster C, May 12, 1997.
[8] Interview with Cluster Leader of Cluster C, May 13, 1997.

children to do well on the SAT-9 tests, and how to incorporate preparatory material into daily lessons.[9]

This was also the case for the professional development and training surrounding the Title I pre-and post-assessment tests. Teachers from each of the four schools praised the TLN for their help in this area especially.[10] More specifically, the principals and teachers reported that the TLN training with teachers on how to pick standards to test, and on how to integrate the preparation into classroom instructional activities provided teachers with concrete examples of how to effectively implement curriculum standards. Teachers explained that formerly, these curriculum guidelines were often vague and did not have much impact on how teachers taught their daily lesson plans.[11]

With respect to the Title I services surrounding the IST process, the TLN coordinators, along with the equity coordinators at each cluster assisted teachers in learning ways to provide in-class instruction to at-risk students with special needs. This is one of the goals of the Title I schoolwide projects: to prevent isolating Title I students from the rest of the students for special services. One Basic Skills Teacher reported that it was encouraging to see this issue being addressed in a systematic way with all classroom teachers, now that there was an equity coordinator in charge of the training.[12] Before the *Children Achieving* created those cluster positions of the equity coordinator and TLN to do regular, on-going training, this type of professional training had only been done on a targeted basis.[13]

By the second year of reform, the equity coordinator role was becoming more clearly defined in ways that fostered the delivery of special educational and support services for Title I students. In the previous year, all four equity coordinators complained that the administrative and paper-work duties of their position prevented them from being in the classrooms more. But this year, their assistance began to shift from an administrative to a more substantive level. At each cluster, the equity coordinators worked with the TLN to customize professional development and training to schools with high proportions of at-risk students.[14] In most cases,

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[9] Interview with principal of School C, May 13, 1997.
[10] As reported by the TLN coordinator of Cluster C, May 12, 1997.
[11] Interview with classroom teacher and a Basic Skills Teacher/SLC coordinator at School B, May 14, 1997.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Interviews with the TLN Coordinator from Cluster A on May 15, 1997; and with the equity coordinator from Cluster C, May 12, 1997.
[14] Interviews with equity coordinators from 4 clusters, May 1997.

the equity coordinator took on the responsibility of getting teachers to focus on how new policies and instruction would affect Title I schoolwide programs, special education, and services for at-risk children. They interpreted the Title I pre-and post-assessment test results with the teachers, encouraging them to think of new ways in which to reach students who were not performing satisfactorily. As one equity coordinator explained, "I help to change mind-sets."[15] Thus, by the second year of reform, the cluster component of the *Children Achieving* reform was integrated with the existing Title I schoolwide programs fostering the priorities of the schoolwide projects.

2. ***School restructuring: Small Learning Communities and School Councils***: In the same way that the District restructuring into smaller clusters began to integrate support services in schoolwide projects, the reorganization of schools into smaller learning communities also seemed to start improving the teaching and learning environment for students. By the second year of having SLCs in their schools, the principals and teachers in schoolwide projects were beginning to see how they could "take ownership" of school reform[16] and tailor it to the specific needs of children at their school by designing thematic units for instruction, reorganizing grade groups into new arrangements, coordinating lesson planning, and introducing more creative learning activities into the classroom.

Nearly everyone interviewed about the SLCs, from cluster leaders to teachers, had positive things to say about the concept of subdividing schools into smaller learning communities. The SLCs were frequently mentioned as one of the most positive aspects of the *Children Achieving* agenda. After a year of having SLCs at their schools, several teachers reported that it gave them more time to plan with other teachers, time that was not specifically organized for that before. Teachers at three schools reported that this was especially helpful when preparing for the Title I pre- and post-assessment tests and the SAT-9 tests. The group planning time gave them the opportunity to coordinate their units of instruction by discussing what students were learning in other grade levels and classes. They were also able to share instructional strategies during that newly-created planning time.[17] Only two teachers reported that planning activities surrounding the SLC took time away from curriculum and instruction.[18]

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[15] Interview with equity coordinator from cluster C, May 12, 1997.
[16] Interview with TLN Coordinator from cluster A, May 15, 1997.
[17] Interviews with two classroom teachers at School D, May 16, 1997; with a Basic Skills Teacher at school C, May 13, 1997; and with a classroom teacher at School A, May 12, 1997.
[18] Interviews with a classroom teacher at School A, May 12, 1997, and with another classroom teacher from School C, May 13, 1997.

Although some teachers and principals expressed frustration at the difficulties of regrouping hundreds of students, rearranging teaching schedules, and re-coordinating instruction time, most teachers and principals also reported that they were finally beginning to overcome the initial obstacles of planning and organization surrounding the set-up phase. They acknowledged that the first year of SLCs had really been a "transition year," or a "phasing-in" time.[19]

Cluster leaders reported that an increasing number of their elementary schools were trying to establish Small Learning Communities on their campuses in the second year of reform.[20] However, when discussing the development of the SLCs, cluster leaders, principals, and teachers frequently alluded to a tension between the quantity and quality of SLCs. While the central administration was pushing for the quick development of a greater number of SLCs in each cluster, some cluster leaders and principals were more patient with the evolution of small learning communities. As one cluster leader explained,

> We have SLCs in about 80% of our elementary schools. But only a few of those schools really get what the concept is about. Those few focus on substantive issues, not just fluff. Building a truly cohesive small learning community of trust among teachers and students takes time; it's not something that can be rushed or mandated by the principal. It has to have a behavioral and emotional component before a substantive curriculum focus can be effectively implemented. [21]

This sentiment was echoed closely by two other principals, several teachers, two TLN coordinators, and every cluster leader interviewed. Rather than pushing to achieve higher numbers of SLCs, the principals who steered the development of SLCs seemed to have a commitment to developing quality SLCs: structures that would allow for meaningful, more personal interaction between teacher and student, especially at-risk students. One principal explained that "the teachers have to learn how to work together and to trust each other first, before they can begin to take the risk of changing the way they relate to each other and to students, which is what the SLC asks them to do."[22]

In schools where SLCs were well underway, they helped with the management of Title I

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[19] Interview with the principal at School A, May 12, 1997.
[20] No formal count for 1997 is available of the total number of SLCs in the first cohort elementary schools to compare with the 1996 figures from the OMG survey.
[21] Interview with the cluster leader from Cluster C, May 12, 1997.
[22] Interview with the principal from School A, May 12, 1997.

services. One TLN coordinator noted that "the SLC helps to blend Title I services into a schoolwide setting,"[23] with an emphasis on integration of students into entire learning communities rather than on classroom ability groups. In turn, the Title I funds and project staff available in schoolwide projects helped facilitate the development of SLCs. For instance, in three of the four schools, the people responsible for coordinating and planning the development of the SLCs were part-time Title I funded staff, such as Basic Skills Teachers and resource teachers. As one BST explained, "we are qualified to do a lot of the SLC coordinating activities because we don't have full-time classroom teaching responsibilities; we are also familiar with many different teachers' schedules, know our way around the bureaucracy of school organization, and we know how to work with many different teachers from our duties as support staff."[24]

Some schools were taking advantage of the SLC structures to help their most at-risk children. One school designed their SLCs specifically to help improve reading skills for at-risk students performing below average. The SLC coordinator, who was also a resource teacher paid in part from the Title I budget, suggested that the school organize students into integrated, multi-age groups with multiple reading abilities. Each group comprised a different SLC, which met for special reading time at various cycles throughout the day. The school was able to use the SLC organization to tailor reading instruction around thematic units, employ peer tutoring, increase one-on-one tutoring time with the students who were at-risk of failing, while at the same time challenging those reading at higher grade levels.[25]

At another school, two teachers entered into a "looping" arrangement, where they each stayed with the same group of students for two years. Each group formed a prototype of a small learning community—instruction was organized around thematic units, special teaching activities were introduced, and the extra year with the same children provided the teachers time to get to know the students on a more individual level. "With this type of long-term one-on-one interaction, we were really able to identify problems and get the at-risk kids help right away. They did better because they knew we would stick with them to work through learning problems or behavioral difficulties. They really thought of themselves as a group by the end of that second year, too, a community."[26]

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[23] Interview with TLN Coordinator from Cluster A, May 15, 1997.
[24] Interview with BST from School D, May 16, 1997.
[25] Interview with BST/SLC coordinator from School B, May 14, 1997.
[26] Interview with classroom teacher from School D, May 16, 1997.

Thus, the Small Learning Community reorganization under *Children Achieving* meshed well with the goals of the Title I schoolwide projects. These were two mutually supporting reform programs which intersected for the educational benefit of at-risk students. However, the School Council has not meshed as successfully with the goals of the Title I schoolwide projects as well as the SLCs have. With the potential for increased site-based decision making and higher levels of parental involvement, the school council has not yet demonstrably improved either. Each of the four schoolwide project sites report having had difficulty setting up the school councils and getting the necessary parent vote to meet official status.[27] Often times, schools already have other formal governing bodies in a school (see Wong & Brown, 1997), and they report that their school council seems superfluous. One TLN coordinator explained, "It's unclear to the teachers exactly what the mission and purpose is of the school council when the schools have so many other schoolwide leadership groups already."[28] On a more optimistic note, one principal expressed her hope that even though her school only had a transitional school council, it is shaping up to be a good voice of constructive criticism for the school: "we can hopefully use our school council as an evaluation tool, to help us see where we're headed and how we're doing."[29] Thus, although it is unclear at this point how the school councils directly foster the goals of the Title I schoolwide projects, they might indirectly help improve school organization once they become more fully established.

3. Classroom Level: Academic Standards and Assessment: While the clusters and SLCs changed the organizational structures at the District and school level, the new academic standards and assessment mechanisms introduced under the *Children Achieving* agenda meshed very well with the goals of the Title I schoolwide projects at the classroom and instructional level. At this level, there were positive intersections between *Children Achieving* and Title I that seemed to directly impact and improve education for at-risk students.

SAT-9 Testing: In close keeping with the goals of the newly authorized Title I assessment requirement, the SAT-9 sought to evaluate all children in the School District and hold Title I students to the same high standards as all other students. Despite the vocal protests by teachers' union to the performance-based exam in its first year, teachers worked with cluster TLN coordinators to prepare their students for the exam during the second year. Although the

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[27] Interviews with three of the principals from Schools A, B, C, and the SLC from School D, May, 1997.
[28] Interview with the TLN Coordinator from Cluster B, May 14, 1997.
[29] Interview with principal from School A, May 12, 1997.

overall performance of the students on the SAT-9 was below expectations the first year, by the second year, there had been slight improvements.[30]

One of the most useful aspects of this test, according to several TLN coordinators, principals, is that it provides a snapshot of academic performance for schools to use to evaluate how their students are doing compared to other schools in the District. When TLN coordinators help schools interpret student achievement data as they design the School Improvement Plan for the year, the SAT-9 score results are proving to be a crucial evaluation tool in discerning which students need extra help and in what areas.[31] This fosters the goals of the Title I program not only in holding Title I students to the same high standards as other students in the District, but it also helps teachers discover where to concentrate their instruction to improve overall classroom performance in certain subjects.

Title I Pre- and Post-Assessment Tests: Possibly the most tangible and direct point of intersection between Title I schoolwide projects and *Children Achieving* is the pre-and post-assessment test required by Title I legislation. Each program helps the other one get implemented, to the ultimate benefit of the children in schoolwide projects. The new District standards provide benchmarks by which all children are measured, even those Title I children in schoolwide projects, thereby helping to implement the assessment requirement of the newly-authorized Title I legislation. These standards provide appropriate measures for gauging the yearly progress of Title I students. In turn, the Title I pre- and post-assessment tests help the *Children Achieving* standards get implemented, as teachers get to choose two standards for their students to be tested on. The TLN network, equity coordinators, and SLC structures help teachers plan for the tests, thus integrating new standards into the curriculum. This helps teachers track the academic progress of at-risk students on a much more thorough basis than was done previously for Title I.[32]

At every school, principals, teachers, and staff are making extensive and conscientious efforts to not only fulfill the Title I testing requirements, but also to weave District standards into the daily lesson plans of the teachers. Most of the cluster administrators, the principals, teachers and staff seem to embrace the goals of the assessment requirement and of the District standards.

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[30] A separate analysis of the scores on the SAT-9 is currently underway, comparing the performance of 2nd and 4th graders on reading and math in schoolwide projects to those of the rest of the District for the 1996 and 1997 test years; data from the Philadelphia School District's Office of Accountability and Assessment.
[31] Interview with TLN Coordinator from Cluster A, May 15, 1997.
[32] Interviews with all four equity coordinators and four cluster leaders, May 12-16, 1997.

The pre-and post-assessment tests have been described as "a good marriage between *Children Achieving* and Title I;"[33] "mesh well with our goals for new curriculum benchmarks;"[34] and "go hand-in-hand with our standards and SAT-9 testing."[35] One equity coordinator explained the particular benefit of the pre- and post-assessment tests in fostering good Title I schoolwide programs:

> When the teachers have to pick the standards to test, design the tests, prepare the children for them, administer them, grade them, and interpret the results, it really lets the schools have more ownership of the Title I programs. They began to realize that Title I belongs to the school. That sense of ownership alone helps Title I get implemented better at these schools.[36]

Not only that, but the pre-and post-assessment tests are helping to change the way teachers instruct children in schoolwide projects. One teacher explained that the process of preparing students for the post-assessment test not only forced her to find ways to integrate the new standard into her daily lessons, but it made her finally visualize what performance-based, alternative assessment was all about. "I didn't really understand what alternative assessment meant until I sat down to try to do it with my kids on this test. There's a lot of problem-solving activity in my classroom now because of what's on those tests, what my kids have to get ready for. They have to explain their answers now, how they got them, not just bubble in a letter on a multiple choice form."[37] Another classroom teacher from another school echoed that experience: "The pre- and post-tests really showed us where we were with our kids. We tied it into our reading and writing instruction. We did exercises to practice in class that mirrored the assessment. I had the kids write, and explain their answers, not just memorize information and pick the right answer from a multiple choice test. That was helpful to get us going on that higher level of reading and writing."[38] As other studies of how teachers respond to curriculum changes indicate, this type of change in teachers' daily practice at the classroom-level is often times the most difficult to affect (Evans, 1996 p.4).

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[33] Interview with cluster leader from Cluster C, May 12, 1997.
[34] Interview with cluster leader from Cluster B, May 14, 1997.
[35] Interview with the TLN coordinator from Cluster B, May 14, 1997.
[36] Interview with TLN coordinator from Cluster A, May 15, 1997.
[37] Interview with classroom teacher, School B, May 14, 1997.
[38] Interview with classroom teacher, School C, May 13, 1997.

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In many cases, the Title I funding has helped provide the professional development time for teachers to learn how to design and prepare for these tests, and the new TLN support services provided by the cluster initiative under *Children Achieving* has given teachers the advice and assistance necessary to make these types of improvements in their day-to-day teaching.[39] Not only is preparing for the test beneficial, but so is evaluating the results. Equity coordinators explain that they are able to sit down with teachers in schoolwide projects and look at the progress of their kids over one year.[40] As the Basic Skills Teacher/SLC coordinator from one school commented of the testing: "This really helps them see who needs help and who is doing OK. I guess I didn't really do that on a systematic basis before. This has really gotten us to think systematically about what we teach, who we teach, and how we teach."[41]

Thus, the pre and post-assessment tests along with the District benchmark standards are prime examples of a very positive intersection between District *Children Achieving* reforms and federal Title I schoolwide programs. This type of classroom level educational change ultimately benefits students directly, which is something that is not often apparent with structural reforms.

Conclusion: Lessons Learned and Questions for Further Study

Given the evidence from the first two years of reform, it seems that the *Children Achieving* agenda is following the pattern of implementation common to other education reform policies: a period of initial conflict and confusion, followed by a gradual adaptation and accommodation of the reform goals to the school settings. Although the political conflicts still persist at higher levels, the cluster administrators, teachers, and principals are finding ways to integrate the core components of the *Children Achieving* agenda into their existing Title I schoolwide programs. They are "tinkering" with both reform agendas, and their efforts seem to foster the implementation of both the *Children Achieving* and Title I schoolwide programs.

Though the pattern of conflict-to-accommodation is emerging in Philadelphia there remain questions for further study. One is to ask why the political conflict and opposition to reform still persists at higher levels. What are the factors which would compel the competing interests to come to a compromise over reform priorities, budget issues, and change strategies? The struggle between the teachers union and the superintendent is potentially very harmful to the successful implementation of reform efforts, as evidenced by dozens of principals and teachers leaving their jobs in the 1997-1998 school year (Jones, 1997). Harmful, too, is the District's

[39] Interview with cluster leader from Cluster C, May 12, 1997.
[40] Interview with TLN coordinator from Cluster C, May 12, 1997.
[41] Interview with BST from School B, May 14, 1997.

budget deficit and an inability of the School District, the school board, the city, and the state to reach an agreement on what to do about school funding. These are complicated issues, obstacles to successful reform which don't have ready solutions. Is it a matter of strengthening the leadership in key positions? Or is this a question of an uneven distribution of power hindering successful implementation, as Murphy might suggest?

Another issue for further investigation would be to examine the driving forces behind the adaptation at the cluster, school, and classroom levels. There, despite higher-level conflict, practitioners are finding ways to work together to introduce gradual changes into traditional routines and familiar settings. What is the motivation for teachers, principals, and administrators to adopt the new reform policies, which obviously require dedicated effort and time to implement? There is variation between sites, of course, in the extent and depth of the changes that take place. But what is it about the successful sites that sustains a commitment to educational reform? Finding those key ingredients—identifying common elements to successful educational change—would be a subject for further study.

For now, the *Children Achieving* agenda seems to be living up to its potential to positively impact the education of at-risk students in schoolwide projects. The new cluster services provided by the TLN and equity coordinators, the Small Learning Communities, and the new Academic Assessment Mechanisms and standards, the *Children Achieving* agenda complements and supports the goals of schoolwide programs and fosters the delivery of support services to disadvantaged students. The evidence gathered from the first two years of *Children Achieving* suggests that the intersection of these two programs ultimately enhances the way each is administered, to the ultimate benefit of the at-risk students in Philadelphia's schools.

Whether this positive interaction can be sustained remains to be seen. The ultimate judge of whether reforms are beneficial will be the improved academic achievement of the at-risk students, something which will become evident only after many years of persistent efforts to improve. But now the structures, personnel, and goals seem to be in place to make that happen. A collective, concentrated effort is now underway to improve the education and services made available to at-risk students in Philadelphia, with the combined policies, programs and personnel of the Title I schoolwide programs and the *Children Achieving* agenda.

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The Laboratory for Student Success

The Laboratory for Student Success (LSS) is one of ten regional educational laboratories in the nation funded by the U.S. Department of Education to revitalize and reform educational practice in the service of children and youth.

The mission of the Laboratory for Student Success is to strengthen the capacity of the mid-Atlantic region to enact and sustain lasting systemic educational reform through collaborative programs of applied research and development and services to the field. In particular, the LSS facilitates the transformation of research-based knowledge into useful tools that can be readily integrated into the educational reform process both regionally and nationally. To ensure a high degree of effectiveness, the work of the LSS is continuously refined based on feedback from the field on what is working and what is needed in improving educational practice.

The ultimate goal of the LSS is the formation of a connected system of schools, parents, community agencies, professional organizations, and institutions of higher education that serves the needs of all students and is linked with a high-tech national system for information exchange. In particular, the aim is to bring researchers and research-based knowledge into synergistic coordination with other efforts for educational improvement led by field-based professionals.

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